DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 016 RE 002 046

By-Thomas, Ellen Lamar

The Role of the Reading Consultant.

Pub Date May 69

Note-19p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Kansas City, Mo., Apr. 30-May 3, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.05

Descriptors-Classroom Techniques, High School Students, Inservice Programs, *Reading Consultants, *Reading Instruction, Reading Material Selection, Reading Programs, *Secondary School Teachers

A number of ways that a reading consultant can assist teachers and students are enumerated in order to define the role of the reading consultant at the University of Chicago Laboratory High School. Here the reading consultant prepares score cards and charts for teacher and librarian reference in checking individual or group abilities, works with librarians to ascertain reading levels of books, seeks out teachers' problems and prepares kits of materials designed to help solve them, conducts inservice sessions and interviews teachers to find ideas for to find ideas for use in classrooms, publishes articles with teachers dealing with successful classroom techniques, and offers a reading resource center to the entire school. References are included. (MD)

ED033016

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Ellen Lamar Thomas
Reading Consultant
University of Chicago
Laboratory Schools

THE ROLE OF THE READING CONSULTANT

This paper answers the following questions about the role of the reading consultant in The University of Chicago Laboratory High School:

"What is your role in your school?"

"How do you work with content area teachers?"

"As your program developed, in what different ways have you come to serve teachers?"

"Do you really have a reading-oriented school?"

"What are your frustrations and failures?"

"What are your hopes for the future?"

As I describe my work, I do not mean necessarily to suggest our ways of working together or our materials for all other schools. In another situation, other materials and procedures may be more effective. I hope the results of our efforts will be suggestive for different situations. The program described is developmental and corrective, not remedial. The University of Chicago Reading Clinic serves severely retarded readers.

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What is your role in your school?

I came to the Laboratory School eight years ago. The school had decided to add a person in reading. No one knew quite what I would do. I was to work with a few students and try to draw teachers into a school-wide effort.

On the train -- all the way across five states -- I made plans. There would be an "instant all-school drive" for better study -- I had read about those in books. There would be "instant demonstrations" on reading in the content areas. Whole departments -- the whole faculty -- would attend.

My plans lasted exactly one day -- when I had a conference with the principal about my job. I was there to help teachers "if and when they asked" -- not to "intrude" or "tell them what to do." Something is very precious in the Laboratory School and jealously guarded. It is each teacher's classroom autonomy. Dr. Congreve said, "When teachers are ready, they'll come to you. There are subtle ways to make them want to." I was to be consulted, then, if anyone wanted to.

With this "lie-very-low" policy, did anything happen? Weeks passed. I was in my office -- not "rushing in" — "available on request" -- burning candles at altars -- praying to be consulted -- longing for home. I looked at Lab School reading scores and wondered why I was there -- average I.Q., 128 -- average student reading at the 89th national percentile.

Then one day a teacher sent me Carole. "She studies night after night till midnight. Please help her study faster." Carole brought along her assignment -- a book on Stone Age weapons -- so advanced -- so technical only a professional archeologist could read it. Girl and assignment were hopelessly apart. Soon other troubled readers came -- with Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations -- with commentary intended for students at Yale.

Some teachers -- especially new teachers -- were thinking, "This is the Lab School. My students can all do college reading - when actually there was a full seven-year range at each grade level. Perhaps, after all, I had a reason for being -- the "reading lonely hearts" who were performing at the bottom of this scale.

Could there be a quiet "drive" to report this range, hoping that some teachers would make adjustments? We went into the "Reading Score-Kit Business." Personalized score-kits were placed right in the hands of teachers -- if they requested one. In the kit was a card for each student -- on it, all

test scores (from the guidance department's annual spring testing) that threw light on reading strengths and weaknesses. Our research director made a conversion scale to convert percentiles on the Cooperative Reading Test into grade levels. That Bob, a sophomore, scored around the level of our average 6th-grader seemed far more eloquent to a classroom teacher than a percentile.

We tried to make the cards so handy, so convenient, that teachers could not resist using them. A science teacher received slightly different test information from that of an English teacher, as did teachers of social studies and mathematics. The teachers of each subject told us just what information they would like to have on their cards. On separate cards, we "pulled out" for each teacher the names of his students who "may have special needs" in vocabulary, comprehension, and speed. Lest the scores be misinterpreted, we delivered the packets in person and gave a careful interpretation. Of course, there were appropriate cautions. Teachers could regard the scores as "only a hint" of the level at which the student could handle most materials. A student should not be "typed" as being locked forever on a certain level.

(If I have been saying "we" instead of "I," it is because I have been fortunate enough to have the assistance of an "intern reading consultant," part of the program for the training of reading consultants at The University of Chicago.)

How else to quietly "shout" the reading range? Posters with a stick figure representing each student went along to meetings. Teachers of sophomores, for example, saw their students spread out from Laboratory School 6th-grade level to above senior level.

Was there still another way? Teachers the school over were given "Class Reading Placement Sheets." These showed at a glance the spread of reading scores within each class--from freshman through senior--and the distribution of students scoring on each grade level. We hoped these spread sheets would be a reminder, as teachers planned reading lists, to offer enough choices and enough copies on the lower levels.

Last fall we brought these "class placement sheets" even closer to the individual teacher. We already had, on the Class Placement Sheet, the spread of this year's entire Senior Class. We now superimposed the levels of the individual teacher's seniors. Dave, a new social studies teacher, saw tallies for the entire Senior Class in purple and those for his own seniors superimposed in red. The names of those who had scored lowest and also highest were written in.

You may be thinking, "Score-kits--posters--spread sheets--you're saying the same thing to teachers over and over!"

Dr. Congreve told me to. He said, "You're like Zest. It's a dainty bar of soap that leaves a lady lingeringly fresh and fragrant--but only for twenty-four hours. Then Zest wears off. And it's all to do over again. Remindings must be applied frequently--just like Zest!"

We even took reading scores to U-High librarians. How could we give them fingertip information? We made an "instant reading-level file" with a card for each student. A librarian could turn to this while a child was waiting for a book and have, in an instant, a hint of his level. When students came crowding for books on Shakespeare's theater--some needing seventh-grade materials, some capable of college reading--librarians could have their levels for instant use.

There was this plea over and over: "When poor readers are assigned readings years beyond them, they simply can't read them, are overwhelmed,

lose out on practice, and fall even farther behind. If readings can include some easier offerings, the poorest reader has some chance to practice reading. The ideal is a sequence of increasingly difficult readings with the student held to all he can do. And our best should be challenged--or we leave these gifted students standing still.

In all these varied ways—score-kits, posters, spread sheets--we tried to translate impersonal black and white percentiles into the personal needs of students.

I had begun to see a reason for being when Carole brought her assignment on Stone Age weapons. But I was still a "lonely-heart" in my office--still praying to feel needed as I had back home.

←"How did you come to work with content area teachers? Do you have any way of inviting requests? Do you just wait for requests to come to you? How did you get the program going? How do you keep it going?"

First, we offer our services to new teachers. We don't meet them with reading at the airport--not quite. But they have hardly unpacked their suitcases before we greet them with it at U-High. It was the principal's custom, on the very first day of preschool, to meet with the new teachers. It was his suggestion one year that part of this meeting-time be given to reading. We acquainted newcomers with our broad range in reading achievement. We quoted statements of highly respected faculty members:

The Chairman of Social Studies: "They scoot over new words--try to get them entirely from context or ask in class.

The Chairman of the Science Department: "They make a whip-through of demanding reading."

The Chairman of the Mathematics Department: "Do these bright kids need to slow down for close, reflective reading? My gosh, yes!"

We offer a list of specific services. We also offer them a "welcome present," their score-kit with a card for each of their next Monday's students. They receive a "take-home" folder with a letter to new teachers, the Class Reading Placement Sheets, and printed advertisements of our services.

Second, we advertise our services to all teachers. We go to meetings, advertise in the teachers' bulletin, put flyers in mailboxes. At the beginning, if some department did not seem aware of us, we prepared a special flyer for that department, a leaflet on "Services of the Reading Consultant for Social Studies," etc. Does interest develop from all this advertising? Sometimes--but not nearly often enough.

So, third, we set out deliberately to draw out a teacher's deepest concerns. This way proves the most effective. We prowl the halls and offices talking with teachers. We often lead off with this question, "What bothers you most about the reading of your students?" Miss Haehn, typewriting, answered: "They read directions in the typing textbook superficially. It's the major block to their progress in typing." We asked, "May we look that book over? Maybe we can think of a way to help." We returned soon and laid possibilities before the teacher: "Do you think it might help if we did this--or this?"

Once in a while a friendship with a teacher "just happened." That was "Serendipity Day!" Mr. Muelder told me, walking up the stairs, how he was already working with his mathematics classes on reading their textbook. I asked, "May I visit some day?" Bob Erickson, art, invited me to visit his art class book collection--begun long ago in 1943. It was "Serendipity Day" when we visited Dorothy in home economics and found her carefully pre-teaching the meaning of the word <u>collander</u> surrounded

with chopped onions, tomato sauce, and Parmesan cheese. While [illegible] classes were making spaghetti.

Fourth, we try to invite requests by meeting those we have promptly and well. I had audited H. Alan Robinson's course on the work of the consultant. He had stressed over and over, "A prompt response says to a teacher that his request is valued." We found that instant or one-day service with brief favors was often possible. A request well-met might lead to another.

Someone may be thinking, "First, you advertise--then you go from teacher to teacher probing for their concerns. Aren't important areas still overlooked?"

I had been counseled, "Don't be intrusive." But as time passed--and this is the fifth and last way of inviting requests--I found that I could go freely to many people with suggestions. To the English Chairman: "May we try to draw all of your teachers into a school-wide vocabulary effort?" To next year's Chairman of the Science Department: "Would your teachers like a project on what to do when students 'just can't get' their science reading?"

← "As your program developed, in what different ways have you come to serve teachers?"

We have mentioned the first of our ten services. We place standardized test results right in the hands of teachers--in convenient form. Second, a natural outgrowth, we help teachers search out materials for students reading on a wide diversity of levels.

Often we do this with standard book lists. A U. S. history teacher asked, "How can I learn the range of books in print for high school use in U. S. history?" An English teacher, "Can you find good quality novels within the reach of my less able readers?" Both these teachers were

For English teachers who wished to match mythical books to students, we trundled carts of books from the elementary library--to stock their classroom bookshelves. Their top students were challenged by Gayley--their poorest could handle Story of the Gods and Heroes.

Teachers considering the use of certain books began to ask, "What is the difficulty-level of this book? Is it appropriate for these students?" We applied readability formulas for the limited help they could give, then examined the book and added our informal comments.

Third, we help groups of teachers work to upgrade reading. "Don't rush in and tell our teachers what to do," our principal, Dr. Congreve, had counseled the first day.

One day the chairman of the sophomore teachers asked, "How can all my teachers in all their different classrooms help all our sophomores become better readers?" Using moments at the mailboxes, walking down the hall, over coffee, under the dryer at the beauty salon, I asked each teacher: "What are your concerns about the reading of your sophomores?" and "What are your own methods of meeting these needs?"

There was much sharing, adding my own ideas, and compiling. In meetings, this was the approach: "How can you work toward better reading? You are already doing it. Here are your best ideas--with added ones of mine." The reaction of some teachers was "But we can do more!" As ideas multiplied, the sophomore teachers and I co-authored an article, "How Teachers Can Help Toward Better Reading (2)."

The time spent in interviewing was my delight--and a luxury permitted by my school. Perhaps--elsewhere--the teachers could have submitted their best ideas--very quickly--in writing.

Soon the Chairman of the Social Studies Department inquired, "How can we avoid overwhelming poor readers?" Again I interviewed the entire department, drew out their ideas, added my own, and offered the suggestions back to the department as an "idea-exchange." Another magazine article resulted, all the teachers contributing practical solutions (6).

I have had three secret hopes in these articles:

1. that by appreciating what teachers were already doing, I would encourage them to continue.
2. that as the almost-finished article went the rounds of all the teachers for their approval, each would learn the best ideas of all the others.
3. that after teachers had subscribed to an article, signed it and published it, they would be lifelong crusaders--with fervor to do even more with reading.

One day during a lull--lulls were not frequent now--my intern queried social studies teachers, "Can we possibly help you next fall?" Teachers of seniors answered, "Yes! Help our students read the documents of 1607." In May, these teachers and I planned sessions for the following October. We developed transparencies, using the actual documents. When October came, the consultant visited each senior class twice, with "how-to-do-it" sessions. The teachers planned reinforcement.

Fourth, we help individual teachers upgrade their students' reading. A young English teacher with no training in remedial reading observed in her seventh graders a need for word attack skills. One day she walked in, asking, "Can anyone with my background learn to teach phonics?"

"How could we help her diagnose needs and teach her to teach word attack skills? How could we help her provide materials not too juvenile for seventh graders?" We

prepared a word-attack kit. In it we placed tests to diagnose the needs of a class, profiles for recording the needs of individuals, and practice materials for teaching many phonic and structural skills--hard and soft c, dipthongs like oi, syllable division. Practice exercises were torn from various workbooks, and coded by grade-level in the upper corner. We chose materials from grade 4 through grade 10; we rejected workbook pages that looked juvenile. As a timesaver, this kit is heaven-sent! If a student or group is having trouble with the sounds of c, for example, it is possible to find, within seconds, practice work on just-the-right level.

But how could a young inexperienced teacher quickly learn how to teach word attack skills? The box itself teaches the teacher. Sound teachers manuals were placed in the box. Recorded in an upper corner of each workbook page were the initials of the corresponding manual. A teacher without the faintest idea how to teach hard and soft c could refer from the practice exercises to the corresponding manual and receive sound instruction.

When working with a group with a common need, this young teacher referred to the kit, then dittoed her own practice materials. When working with an individual, she placed the appropriate practice exercise in a plastic envelope, and the student wrote on the plastic with a china marker. Thus, the materials were reusable.

We had conferences with the teacher--first on the test results, then, on the use of the kit.

Preparing such a kit may look formidable. The hardest part--for me--was deciding on the categories of skills. The lists of skills in standard workbooks helped. While this box is elaborate, a simpler, very useful box can be made in an evening.

Reading teacher[illegible] home in Florica where I'd taught for a number of years, made devices like the word attack kit on in-service days. Someone made a model and ordered all the materials that would be needed. Those who were interested, gathered, worked all day, and by the end of the day had such a treasure to take to school the next day.

We hoped the kit would be a sound investment of our time and effort--that it would add to a young teacher's resources--and strengthen her present and her future students.

Dave, the first year social studies teacher, had requested his "welcome present," his kit of reading scores. Then he thought of something else. "My seniors are starting a very difficult book on the history of political parties. How can I help them read it?" We borrowed the book, studied the blocks that confronted his students, then returned with possible helps. Lest we overwhelm a first-year teacher, we placed the tips in separate folders, each with a manageable amount of reading lore--"How a Social Studies Teacher Can Help Before His Students Start a Reading Assignment," "What Students Can Do if They 'Just Can't Get It'"--and others. We had a conference on the folders, then left them with Dave to be consulted whenever needed.

Fifth, we make classroom visits to work on reading improvement along with the classroom teacher. These visits are always planned with the teacher beforehand. There is almost always an exchange of knowledge, the consultant learning from the content area expert, the classroom teacher acquiring insights about reading. Such was the case when the chemistry teacher suggested a visit.

A few weeks before, this teacher had asked, "Can you give Jon some reading lessons by himself? He doesn't get what he should from his chemistry

textbook." I was in a panic over helping with chemistry. No one was more surprised than I when Jon improved, moved up to a B, and made B's ever after.

Then the teacher, pleased about Jon, asked, "What did you do? Let's do it for all the students in September." Together we worked out a "how-to-read-your-textbook" session, adapting PQRST* to the chemistry textbook. Our session in the fall was a team effort. The consultant suggested general procedures for each step--preview, question, and so on. Then the chemistry teacher demonstrated how to carry out that step with the chapter assigned.

Sixth, we often create, with teachers, materials for giving instruction--materials tailored to the needs they observed in their students. We had asked teachers, "What bothers you most about your students' reading?" Mr. Tirro had answered: "Something's the matter with their reading in music harmony." Mr. Ferguson: "They need desperately to improve their reading of laboratory procedures." Mrs. Symkowicz: "They need to read a recipe--and the directions on package mix!" From harmony of music to package mix! How could a reading person feel any confidence--hope to be helpful?

If from our varying ways of working together a pattern emerges, it is something like this.

First, I explore the need with the teacher: "How do your students fall short in this kind of reading?" "What ideas do you already have for meeting these needs?" Then I inquire, "What chapter--what part of the textbook is appropriate for giving some instruction?" At that point I retire into complete seclusion and study--everything I can find in the reading literature. Then, in unhurried talks together, the teacher

* PQRST is a study procedure very much like Francis Robinson's Survey Q3R. The P refers to Preview, the Q to Question, the R to Read, the S to State, and the T to Test. Detailed information may be found as Reference (2), cited at the end of this paper, in the book by Staton.

and I plan the instruction and the materials. I try to free the teacher of the burden of the mechanical details, sometimes of much of the writing. I am underfoot constantly, laying possibilities before the teacher, asking, "Do you think this would help?" And I am underfoot again--to ask a final blessing.

Let me give you an example. One morning, five reading teachers and I worked on materials to improve the reading of [illegible] geometry textbooks. These were to be used the following fall. My intern and I [illegible] teacher's insights: "Why does geometry call for new reading approaches?" "How do you help students master difficult technical terms?" "How should they approach the pages and pages of expository reading?" "How do you help them read diagrams?" "How do you encourage an appropriate speed?" "How do you help them read theorems?"

The best ideas of the five geometry teachers, with many added ideas of mine, were compiled into a comprehensive section for students' notebooks. The exchange of knowledge between experienced teachers and the consultant strengthened each and seemed priceless.

Could this exchange occur with less competent teachers or with young, new teachers? It has usually been possible to draw <u>some</u> contribution from each teacher--to incorporate <u>some</u> contribution-- so that the final product is at least partly his. And the one who contributes <u>least</u> is exposed to all the ideas that have proved effective with all the others.

The <u>seventh</u> way of serving is the building of procedures for helping with reading skills right into courses of study. Dr. Congreve, in the paper which preceded mine, mentioned that scores in vocabulary were trailing--and that the English Department rose to that need and incorporated vocabulary activities into the English curriculum. We have just revised these

in a booklet, "A Program for Vocabulary Development" (1). In this booklet are the favorite vocabulary ideas of each of our English teachers. Again, I was the interviewer and compiler. We tried not to place an added load on a far-too-busy English teacher--rather to suggest ways to develop vocabulary in the day to day work of classes through the regular course materials.

We wanted--if we could--to counteract the rapid turnover on our faculty--the loss of strength as teachers leave our school. Here--treasured up--are the precious insights of teachers with years of Laboratory School experience--to be passed on--through this booklet--to young, incoming teachers.

We produced another booklet for English teachers, "A Program for Speed Adjustment" (4). We suggested ways to develop speed adjustment in the regular work of classes through the regular course materials.

Eighth, we offer the school a reading resource center. We assembled a collection of commercial materials quickly. But often these were not exactly right. So over the years we developed a collection of "home-grown" products--materials custom-tailored to the needs of our school. Teachers are encouraged to borrow freely.

We made a few tapes of teachers working on reading within their classrooms. A young mathematics teacher, if he likes, can turn on a taped lesson of an experienced colleague working with his class on reading the mathematics textbook.

A few professional books and useful research findings are in the center, and many more, just a step away in the university library.

The ninth service--the reading consultant is responsible for the soundness of the school's program. Someone has said, "Ulysses was lucky--he had sirens luring him from only one rock." In the field of reading there are jagged rocks and sirens everywhere, and the consultant must

guide the school safely past the sirens to a sound program. One of the most enticing sirens is always speed-reading. When U-High teachers were polled informally concerning the special needs of their students, their most frequent answer was "Our students need speed-adjustment. Especially do our bright, perhaps over-confident students need to develop a close, reflective approach to reading." Science teachers observed that many read their science "like a novel." University High is driving not for indiscriminate speed, but for day-to-day instruction and reinforcement within the classroom on how and when to skim, how and when to do rapid reading, and especially how and when to do slow, intensive reading. When special training to improve rate of reading is in order for individual students, it is provided through the Reading Clinic. Some commercial enterprises will gladly take over a school's reading program, making speed the "end-all." The consultant is available to support a school in resisting such pressures.

We have mentioned that the University of Chicago Reading Clinic serves the Laboratory School. There a clinician instructs our retarded readers. Our ~~last~~ tenth offering is liaison service. We are the Pony Express between the Laboratory School and the Reading Clinic. We assist teachers in making referrals. When they ask, "Which students should I refer?" we provide specific guidelines. For some years we have written a letter about each student enrolled in the clinic to each of his content area teachers and to librarians. We want to enlist his classroom teachers in the "Rescue Operation," to give them some idea of the level at which the ~~child~~ student is capable of reading, to alert them to his special needs, to encourage them to recognize and praise small successes.

"Aren't you materials-happy? You generate so many."

Many of our projects were first efforts. A classroom teacher with a completely new reading project seemed to appreciate materials to lean on.

Then, too, we hoped the project would continue year [illegible]. We printed materials in quantities--left quantities in the [illegible]. We hope these materials, on hand [illegible], encourage the teacher to continue on [illegible] year.

There's a very natural question: "[illegible] others?"

That much is [illegible]--our testing program, our [illegible] these superior teachers. We have mentioned, however, the wide reading range below our hair-[illegible] surface. But, in addition, we have a [illegible] over of faculty members devoted time to the growth of a reading program. Our teachers prove tempting to other schools and are lured away from us. When school bells ring each fall, many of last year's teachers are no longer with us; they have taken their interest in reading out of our school and away from our students. Then there's much to go over again with another crop of teachers.

What do you have here? a finished product? a model reading-oriented school? a success story?

All teachers are not involved. Interest is uneven throughout our school. If our program has a touch of uniqueness, it's proving that teachers in every discipline can be involved and active.

They do not ask, "Isn't that the English teacher's job?" or "Why didn't students learn to read on a lower level?" Each is aware that in his course the student may meet patterns of writing never before encountered--the laboratory manual, the typing practice book, harmony of music, a geometry theorem, a sewing pattern--that nowhere in all his years at school has the student had a chance to learn to cope with these types of reading.

Classroom teachers must add a skill or two at a time, to their competencies in improving reading. Most of these teachers do not consider themselves experts in teaching reading in their content areas. In high school reading, where much is unexplored, they are gradually working out ways to teach some of the reading skills of their subjects. Our projects are in various stages, as you would expect in a school, some in the planning stage, others proved and refined.

To sum it up, at this stage a truly school-wide reading program at University High isn't the dream fulfilled and it isn't Don Quixote's "impossible dream" either.

"What are your frustrations and failures?"

There are "Success Days" and also "Failure Days." The visit to the chemistry class, though sound enough in planning, went all wrong. The Lab School's top science students had their own effective methods--some were Junior Einsteins and couldn't care less about our pointers. Perhaps we should have selected those who felt some need. Sometimes a teacher hands out our materials without a word of instruction--counts on the materials to do the teaching. There's a chance that some of the English teachers who received the booklets on vocabulary and speed-adjustment have yet to look inside them. Dr. Congreve would remind me of Zest--its delicate fragrance fading. We must try anew and anew and remind and reapply Zest every twenty-four hours.

I am encouraged by teachers like those who have contributed to this volume--who have learned with me, taught me, inspired me, and kept me going on my "Failure Days."

"What are your hopes for the future?"

First, we'd like to create tests far more revealing than standardized tests. We're planning informal testing for next fall, using students' actual course materials, starting in science. We hope this type of testing will "catch on" all through the school.

Second, we hope to build help with reading skills right into the courses of study in more and more disciplines. We have already prepared booklets for English teachers on vocabulary and speed adjustment. Missing from the trilogy is one on comprehension. We hope to have it ready next fall. I am now working with science teachers on a booklet about how to improve reading in the day-to-day work of science classes, hoping this will be worth including in the course of study. We hope also to develop something that has never before existed--a music course of study with reading skills built in.

Teachers at University High School are trailblazing in secondary school reading instruction. We've plunged into the woods--made marks on trees--blazed a few paths--been lost at times--then sometimes found our way again. A new England poet, referring to woods in quite a different context, wrote "the woods are lovely, dark and deep". . ."and miles to go before I sleep." We'll continue working in our school--in our woods--with miles more to go in our program.

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